

THE WOODS ACADEMY 8th Grade Curriculum Overview

English Language Arts

The Woods Academy Eighth Grade English Course uses *Holt Language Arts (Third Course)* and *Holt Literature (Second Course) Resources for Teaching Advanced Students* as core materials; both textbooks are available to our students online. Additional readings are taken from a variety of anthologies, novels, and nonfiction sources.

Literary selections are taught by both genre and theme. Frequent use of newspaper and magazine articles is included to build background knowledge and vocabulary. Students participate in whole class, small group and individual literature study, and self-selected book clubs--including single-gender book groups. Eighth grade selections may include, but are not limited to: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Warriors Don't Dry*, *Shane*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Legacy* (James Michener), poetry, short stories and essays. Increasingly difficult oral and written literary analysis—examining the elements of plot, character, setting, theme, and point of view through close readings--is expected, with a focus on the examination of style and theme. The study of literature is frequently integrated with the students' study of American history. Outside recreational reading is required of all students. An in-depth analysis of the hero and archetypes in literature includes the examination and analysis of selected motion pictures and contemporary and classical literature. A poetic version of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and an introduction to Shakespeare are part of this unit, as are the movies, *Star Wars* and *The Natural*.

Through writing, students polish their style, as well as their mechanics, grammar, and spelling. While the emphasis in eighth grade is on expository writing, creative writing is part of our weekly Readers/Writers Workshops. The 6 + 1 Traits of Writing are taught, providing students with an organized system to self-check written work before submitting it. Vocabulary development includes study of SAT words and words found in readings. Word structure and etymology is taught as an aid to vocabulary and spelling through *Words Their Way*, a developmental spelling program that encourages word study beyond memorization—using word structure to develop accurate spelling, pronunciation, and meaning. To encourage independent learning, study skills and metacognitive strategies including organization, note taking, time management, and graphic organizer use, are taught and practiced.

Mathematics

Algebra A

Students investigate all the topics included in a first year algebra course: solving and graphing linear, exponential and quadratic equations; solving and graphing linear inequalities and systems of equations; evaluating integer powers of real numbers; writing and computing with polynomials; and analyzing, and classifying and evaluating functions. Students learn to describe the world around them using algebraic



expressions, equations, graphs and statistics. Graphics calculator use is required. Spreadsheets and computer algebra systems are used to develop patterns and develop and practice skills. Geometry, probability and statistics are integrated to motivate, justify, extend, and enhance the important algebraic concepts.

Algebra B

Students investigate some of the topics included in a first year algebra course: solving and graphing linear and exponential equations; solving and graphing linear inequalities; evaluating integer powers of real numbers; Students learn to describe the world around them using algebraic expressions, equations, graphs and statistics. Basic skills with whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and integers are reinforced. Graphics calculator use is required. Spreadsheets and computer algebra systems are used to develop patterns and develop and practice skills. Geometry, probability and statistics are integrated to motivate, justify, extend, and enhance the important algebraic concepts.

Science

Students focus on physical science using the Introduction to Physical Science (IPS) program. Students conduct investigations throughout the year that cultivate an understanding of the atomic model. The IPS text leads students toward an understanding of automaticity by following the historical development of our understanding of matter. Students begin the year developing their lab skills, distinguishing between mass and volume measurements, and then learning about the characteristic properties by which substances are recognized and separated. Students progress by refining their understanding of mixtures, compounds, elements, and subatomic particles. Throughout the year, grade eight students improve their ability to analyze data, draw conclusions, and expand inferences to real world phenomena.

Social Studies

In eighth grade social studies, students complete their study of United States history. Continuing from the Age of Andrew Jackson, students study the expansion of the United States in the nineteenth century, the antebellum years, the Civil War, Reconstruction, immigration and the conflicts that shaped America in the twentieth century at home and abroad. To enhance their study of the Civil War, students go on a four day trip to Manassas National Battlefield Park, National Civil War Medicine Museum (Frederick, MD), Antietam National Battlefield Park, and Gettysburg National Battlefield Park. While gaining an understanding of the people, places and events during this extensive time in American history, students continue to build an appreciation for and background knowledge of multiple cultures and geography; in analyzing these facets, students become expert historians, archaeologists, economists, sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists. Utilizing Prentice Hall's The American Nation online text and the hands-on *History Alive* program, students continue to learn, develop, and practice essential study, test taking, and note taking skills; critical thinking skills; and, more



importantly, how to analyze the impact of conflict in history and relate it to their own lives.

Religion

The theme for this course is Church History. Students study the history of the Catholic Church – from Pentecost until present day. Additionally the eighth grade students prepare for the sacrament of Confirmation using the “Life in the Spirit” text book. The spring trimester is dedicated to studying Theology of the Body. In this unit students consider how their bodies are a gift from God and reflect on ways to live a moral life.

In Religion class students explore the teachings of the Catholic faith and their relationship with God. Religion teachers uphold the academic integrity of the subject while also challenging students to reflect on the role that faith plays in their everyday lives. Students in grades five through eight begin each week with prayer in Monday Morning Chapel. Additionally the entire school celebrates Mass about once a month and students serve as lectors, singers, gift-bearers and altar servers. Students in the upper school are paired with prayer partners from the lower school. Prayer partners sit together during Mass and participate in special events together throughout the year. Community service is an integral part of religious instruction at all levels. Through service to others, students come to better appreciate their responsibilities as moral beings.

MODERN LANGUAGE – FRENCH AND SPANISH

In French and Spanish, the students continue to focus on the four basic skills of language learning begun in the lower school. As progress is made, communication topics are expanded and lessons are built around the basic skills. Grammar is presented formally for reference but in functional and practical situations. Cultural awareness is also taught within each lesson. Both languages also include supplementary cultural units including the study of Francophone and Spanish speaking countries, the regions of France and the Spanish speaking countries, French artists of the 19th century, and well known Latin American and Spanish artists. Special projects are done in class including PowerPoint presentations, e-mail communications, a French “dejeuner”, and a Latin fiesta. Eighth grade students are encouraged to take the National French Test or the National Spanish Test sponsored by the National Association of Teachers of French and the National Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese.

ARTS

Grade 5-8 Music

The Music Program is designed to engage students’ minds, bodies, and spirits through singing, song-games, and instrument playing. Based on the Kodaly and Orff methods



of music teaching, the ultimate aim of the program is to instill in each student a love and appreciation of all types of music.

As students progress through fifth and sixth grades, they work together to decode the rhythmic, melodic, and expressive elements of music, ultimately learning to read and write standard music notation. Students explore rhythm and melody through percussion instruments, Orff xylophones, and recorders. Using songs from traditional folk and classical repertoire, students develop their singing voices. To reinforce aural skills, students learn solfege body signs and hand signs. These hands-on, skills-based music classes encourage students to fully participate in music-making. The music course for the seventh and eighth grade students is designed to train the students for performance and participation in the Annual Arts Celebration.

Frequent performing opportunities give students a chance to expressively share the music they have studied. Students participate in school performances such as Grandparents' Day, Christmas Concert, school masses, chapel, lunch-time recitals, and class showcases. In addition, Upper School students may choose to join the extra-curricular Chorus or Instrumental Ensemble. Through studying and performing music, students develop poise, personal expression, confidence, and a life-long love of music.

Grades 5-8 Fine Arts

The art program for upper school students is a hands-on experience and helps students gain a better understanding of themselves and those around them. Students at all grade levels study works created by artists representing cultures and periods different from their own, and making them aware of the beliefs, ideas, and feelings of people of various ethnic origins, religions, and cultures. Students are exposed to a variety of media including drawing, printmaking, architecture, sculpting, painting, and ceramics. Students develop their skills in an environment that emphasizes creative expression and an appreciation for the contribution of others. This also includes the study of art history, analysis, and aesthetic discussions. Students are encouraged to experiment, take risks, developing their creativity, skills and imaginations. Through the study of art at The Woods, students prepare for an active role in keeping their own culture alive. They are taught to extend their education beyond the classroom and encouraged to have a meaningful relationship with the arts throughout their lives.

Grade 6 Technology

Students work on digital media projects. Students create an electronic portfolio in Microsoft Publisher. This project allows students to show their work for all of their subject areas. Students learn how to scan documents, apply basic web site design, and take digital photographs. Another part of this course is how to make a television show. Students will produce and edit their work by using Windows Movie Maker.

Grade 7 and 8 Technology



Students who take technology as an elective learn about game design. Specifically, students focus on understanding the fundamentals of computer programming. Ultimately, students produce 2D and 3D computer games.

Grade 7 and 8 Dramatic Arts

Students explore the fundamentals of dramatic arts from acting, singing, and improve to vocal projection, monologues, and dialogues. Students also learn the various elements of production such as casting, blocking, rehearsing and performing. Throughout this course the students have opportunities to perform their work. The foundation students build in this course is a great asset to the Spring Musical.

GUIDANCE AND HEALTH

Grade 5 Health

Students participate in a trimester-long health class that informs them of a variety of issues related to their health. Specifically, students learn about the four major chronic diseases in the United States: cardiovascular disease, diabetes II, osteoporosis, and cancer. Discussions of these diseases focus on their symptoms, risk factors, and means of prevention or risk reductions. The broader topics of nutrition and exercise are pervasive throughout class discussions. Other topics addressed during the course include, but are not limited to, the following: allergies, iPod use and ear health, smoking, and human reproductive systems. The goal of every activity and discussion in the class is to expand the students' knowledge base regarding the above-mentioned topics and, thus, allow them to make healthier lifestyle choices in order to live longer, healthier lives.

Grade 5 and 6 Guidance

The Woods Academy takes a comprehensive, developmental approach in teaching guidance to our fifth and sixth grade students through the collaborative efforts of the upper school science teacher in the area of health. This includes students being presented with developmentally appropriate information related to matters of family life including health, nutrition, hygiene, exercise, physiology and the biology of their changing bodies according to grade level. The guidance program also includes topics in a broad educational approach designed to support students' social emotional growth and development. With the changing demands of the 21st century on students at this grade level, curriculum related to internet safety, bully prevention, social consciousness, character building, and stress management has been incorporated into the program.

Grade 7 and 8 Guidance

In the 7th and 8th grade, students are presented in guidance with curriculum that focuses their learning on issues of the 21st century including family life (encompassing values, personal integrity, family, community building, diversity/stereotyping, sexuality, relationships, and faith), and the Woods Academy Youth Series (WAYS). The WAYS guidance curriculum presents students with learning that includes facts about media



literacy/ internet safety, drugs and alcohol, eating disorders, stress management, depression, and safe dating. In addition to the WAYS program, guidance lessons include topics of conflict resolution, communication skill building, making and keeping friends. The Director of Guidance, at times, works in collaboration with the Science teacher and the Religious Education teacher in presenting curriculum to the students that deals with aspects of health and values related to the emerging adolescent. In guidance class, Catholic values, rules, and standards are incorporated into our teachings.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The upper school physical education program follows the “Moving into the Future” National Association for Sport and Physical Education National Standards and Appropriate Practices. Units such as: soccer, basketball, floor hockey, volleyball, table tennis, dance, diamond-type activities, track-field, team hand ball, and tennis are implemented. Emphasis is placed on safety, skill development and complex movement concepts (rules and strategies), individual physical fitness level, teamwork, sportsmanship, and character development. Through introduction, refinement and mastery of motor skills and movement concepts the students are highly encouraged to exhibit a physically active lifestyle. Students participate twice a year in the President’s Challenge - a series of physical fitness tests. Students are also invited to participate in the after-school interscholastic program. Teams participate in the Capitol Athletic Conference, described in the Parent Student Handbook.

